

Workers' Fight

INTERNAL BULLETIN

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"We must.. create a cadre organisation on a high minimum level of Marxist revolutionary culture, and a very high level of commitment to the struggle. In this organisation comrades from different classes and backgrounds must fuse into a cadre which is as Gramsci put it composed of 'intellectuals of a new type' - that is, educated working class revolutionaries" (Notes on the fusion of education and organisation).

The December NC agreed on a campaign to build WF. It was recognised that if the campaign is to be successful, it must combine increased activity like paper selling with a renewed effort to put into practice the ideas on the fusion of education and organisation, to ensure that we systematically develop ourselves and our contacts, and through this build a cadre organisation.

Socialist forums should enable us to combine developing ourselves and our contacts, with giving us a regular 'public face' through which to attract new contacts. They should build on and supplement, not substitute for, regular one to one education between members, and between members and close contacts.

So far there has been almost no exchange of ideas and information about the planning and implementation of socialist forums. I am outlining the plans of the Liverpool branch in the hope that other branches can make use of the ideas, or put forward alternatives.

In addition to the general points outlined above, we see the aims of socialist forums as follows: a) to combine basic Marxist education with outlining the position of WF, making clear the relevance of Marxism for the struggle of the working class now. This approach is particularly necessary because our contacts include experienced members of other tendencies, and politically uneducated workers. b) To develop our own comrades. Therefore we have spread the organisational tasks involved, including literature, and, more importantly, each comrade, including probationary members, has at least one topic to prepare, either on his or her own or with another comrade. The comrade involved presents an outline on their topic at the branch meeting the week before the relevant forum, so that the comrade can gain confidence, and educate himself and the rest of the branch before the forum takes place.

The forums are held fortnightly, as far as possible.

The programme is as follows:

1. Lenin
2. Marxism
3. Capitalism and the working class
4. The State
5. Fascism
6. The Labour Party and the Trade Unions
7. The general strike
8. Stalinism
9. The Fourth International
10. Women
11. Racialism and imperialism
12. Ireland.

ON THE FAMILY: A REPLY TO CB & MR (see IB 19)

Fran Brodie

Primitive Communism and the Family

Cynthia and Maria have failed to point out that women were oppressed in primitive society, biologically and physically. It was still "women and children", that age-old little set-up. Women were still tied to the children. The reason for this oppression was that the material conditions had not been created for the emancipation of women. Women were not bullied and oppressed as they are today in a capitalist society, but in the past and the not so distant past, which can be counted in ten years, women were and still are slaves to their biological make-up (even though we do have the pill and thrombosis!) I am not saying that the root of women's oppression is biological, but it shouldn't be dismissed lightly.

Capitalism and the Family

On the 'middle class' family, Cynthia and Maria seem to be saying that the reason for the 'equality' between men and women of the 'middle class' family is because the man is less tired and she has equal pay! Surely the reason for the middle class women being less oppressed by the family is in their relation to the economic production of capitalist society - and not because the man is less tired, or the woman has equal pay. Maybe he is tired, maybe she doesn't get equal pay, maybe she doesn't work, and quite a number of 'middle class' families still have their 'little treasure', the 'daily woman' who does the donkey work - the working class woman.

And besides, what's equal pay? Equal pay isn't going to make any difference to the oppression of women in the family. She can have equal pay - but she still comes home to the "women's work", it is still "a woman's place is in the home". I believe this to be the case for the women from the 'middle class' home.

The working class women are far more oppressed because of their relation to the economic production of capitalist society, and not "the lack of equal pay". Equal pay makes no difference to the position of women inside the family, not unless the root of women's oppression is just the lack of equal pay and not the family and private property.

"The economic position of some women enables them actually or potentially to be independent" (IB 19). Well, 'independent' of man? 'independent' in relation to the family? 'independent' in relation to bringing the children up? No individual is 'independent', we depend on being able to sell our labour power, we depend on society, we depend on the capitalist system to eat. The one thing that is happening is that men and women of the working class rely on two wages, because a working class family can hardly survive on one wage! One of the beliefs of those who argue for 'Wages for Housework' is that 'Wages for Housework' will give women 'independence'. We as socialists fight against 'Wages for Housework'. The reason we fight for equal pay is because it is a demand that takes women forward so that women are no longer a scab force, a source of cheap labour, so that it will encourage women out into society - but equal pay is a farce if there are not more nurseries for the women to use, and the 'Green Paper' does not include nurseries!

Cynthia and Maria seem to have laid too much emphasis on equal pay and not enough on the roots of women's oppression, which is the family and private property.

They have also left out the mass of bourgeois ideology, the myths of 'womanhood' and 'motherhood', ideology which is a material force in class society. The oppression of women is not just economic.

As I said at the beginning of this article, I believe that woman has always been oppressed, that women have always been subordinated to men. That does not mean that it cannot be changed, but women were slaves when there weren't any slaves. The oppression of women is an oppression of thousands of years. The only society that can free woman is a socialist society, one that will bring about the complete absorption of the housekeeping functions of the family into society.

In 1972, Workers Fight assumed a position in the vanguard of the revolutionary left in Britain through its political analysis and leadership during the crisis over the Pentonville Five, summed up in the call, developed before the crisis, for a general strike to smash the Industrial Relations Act; well argued after the crisis as against other tendencies in the pamphlet The Left and the Crisis. It was this advanced position, together with Workers Fight's more principled revolutionary position on the questions of Ireland and the Common Market, together with the more and more open degeneration of IS, which led myself, and several others, to join Workers Fight early in 1973.

Since then, however, it is by no means so clear that Workers Fight has maintained its decisive superiority in a changing political situation. The question is one of Marxist method, and since this particular political period is at an end with the defeat of the Tory government, and also because I have come to certain specific criticisms and disagreements with Workers Fight's political line and analysis recently, it seems to me an appropriate time to review the group's political record, over roughly the time since I became involved with it.

In his introduction to The Industrial Relations Act and the Fight for a General Strike, dated 1st June 1973, Sean Matgama wrote: "In the last year Workers Fight has given a great deal of space to the clarification of these problems. We did not make the general strike our panacea, nor 'reject' 'normal' politics. Such 'rejection' would anyway be a sectarian conceit on the part of a tiny group, and would be an ideological capitulation to syndicalism, seeing industrial direct action as the only weapon, the general strike as the only strategy. But we did and do believe that the following are the first letters in the political alphabet of Trotskyism: 'To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses no matter how bitter it may be... to base one's programme on the logic of the class struggle; (our emphasis) to be bold when the hour for action arrives - these are the rules of the Fourth International' (Leon Trotsky; The Death Agony of Capitalism)"

It is these standards which I hope to attempt to apply to Workers Fight's subsequent political performance, during the more complex and difficult period which we have experienced since the date those words were written. In doing so, I intend to take up again the issue of syndicalism, and also related tendencies towards what I consider to be dogmatism and economism in Workers Fight, especially in relation to the questions of the general strike and the general election, which I believe to have been inadequately discussed and understood in the organisation. My intention is of course to help to further the task of clarification referred to above, in the hope of better preparing the group for the perils of the coming period.

The Crisis and the Labour Party.

In 1973, at its annual conference and at a special national conference later, the group was divided over the questions of economic perspectives and the Labour Party. It now appears to me that neither of these questions was fully and satisfactorily resolved, as the discussions held at the time and also the group's subsequent political practice reveal. Two perspectives were presented on the economic situation and prospects; one expecting generally a continuation of the indeterminate position of last year, and one of a more 'catastrophic' character, predicting a deepening crisis. Though I was one of the loudest opponents of the second perspective, events since the special conference, amounting to a catastrophic crisis for British capitalism, have, I now admit, proved me wrong, and Roy Ratcliffe justified in reasserting his position. The rejection of the crisis perspective (largely, on my part, still under the influence of IS economic assumptions - though this should not be taken as a conversion to Healyism - the crisis exists independently of Healy's ravings, which in the present circumstances only help to obscure it) has led, in my

opinion, to serious misjudgements of events and possibilities, particularly in relation to Phase 3 (as already acknowledged), the miners' strike and the Tory government, by Workers Fight. This argument I propose to take up through a comparison with the IMG, which I now believe to have held a more correct analysis and perspective over these issues (see, e.g. Mandel, Decline of the Dollar, on the international monetary crisis).

On the Labour Party, however, I consider Workers Fight to have established a superior theoretical analysis and more realistic practical orientation, both relating to entrism and specific demands of the Labour government in the post-election situation, though not in the previous period, during which I believe the IMG's call for a general strike to kick out the Tories to have been right. Both here, and in the application of the entrism tactic correctly adopted at the special conference last year, and even more importantly in the coming period, there appear to be certain one-sided errors, contradictions, and weaknesses which need to be corrected urgently.

"In a sense there is a contradiction between a governmental slogan based on existing, old organisations, and the general strike slogan opening out the possibility of new politics. In some circumstances, the general strike can serve as a sort of 'substitute' for a governmental slogan...

"But in a situation where the new politics and the old organisations will clearly closely interpenetrate in fact, then the Marxists must take account of that in their propaganda. One might compare the Bolsheviks' apparently inconsistent coupling of 'All Power to the Soviets' and the Constituent Assembly slogan in 1917.

"I mention this in case comrades should conclude from our present-day rejection of 'General Strike to kick the Tories out', based on the present-day dynamics of the class struggle and the present-day relation of the Labour Party to that struggle, a condemnation of such slogans for all time" (Martin Thomas 18.3.73).

The decisions of the 1973 national conference and special conference on the Labour Party and economic perspectives were followed by a period of confused discussion and reorientation (see for example the 8 July London discussion on the Labour Party in I.B. 14, part 1). That these questions were not fully and satisfactorily clarified and resolved has shown itself in a certain dualism which has since persisted in Workers Fight's internal discussions and open propaganda up to the present period, producing throughout a series of false dichotomies and dilemmas and resulting in several one-sided errors in estimation of economic and political realities and the necessary revolutionary policies to be advocated and pursued by the working class and its vanguard.

This dualism can be analysed through a succession of false alternatives presented as solutions to problems posed by one-sided views of reality. It can also usefully be discussed by a comparison with the IMG's attempts over the same period to present a totalising approach to political reality through the central slogan of a general strike to kick the Tories out. In making this comparison, we can perhaps begin to understand the mistakes and inadequacies of each opposed position as the products of differing views of reality, deriving ultimately from the dominant French and English bourgeois philosophies - empiricism and rationalism. As in the case of all such one-sided and inadequate philosophies or ideologies, these lead to inevitable contradictions, and in this particular example to an interesting reversal of positions...

We can begin with the above-mentioned discussion on the Labour Party, in which Martin Thomas put forward the position which he soon withdrew, but which can still be instructive, that he summed up as "do it effectively outside parliament and demand parliamentary ratification". This amounted to nothing much more than syndicalism, ideological capitulation to which Sean Matgamna was simultaneously condemning in his Introduction to the General Strike pamphlet, as quoted above. The interesting point is that Martin Thomas's position closely resembled that now adopted by the IMG, since the election of the Labour government: "Rely only on your own struggles". Meanwhile, while the IMG pursued the line of the general strike to kick out the Tories, Workers Fight dropped the general strike slogan to relate instead to 'normal politics'. This now results

in the IMG and Workers Fight raising almost identical demands; by the IMG to the rank and file, by Workers Fight to the Labour government!

Workers Fight's pursuit of 'normal politics' and entrism in the Labour Party led, I shall argue, in a rightward direction while simultaneously retaining a residual syndicalism in relation to direct action by the working class, which, looking back to 1968 and 1972, Sean Matgamna had partially criticised in his introduction to the General Strike pamphlet. This rightward entrism tendency was manifested, in my view, contrary to the intention of the original entry resolution of the special conference of 1973, in the form of an ideological capitulation to Labourism, specifically over the dogma of the separation of direct action from politics, which took on an acute stage during the period of the miners' strike and the general election. This corresponded and co-existed with a complementary accompanying ultra-left rhetoric concerning direct action, general strikes, and insurrections, which attempted to provide a revolutionary cover for what was in effect a right-wing policy.

The decision on the Labour Party entry was taken in a principled manner, which maintained that no concessions were to be made politically, and that our aim was to direct our activities outward from the Labour Party towards direct action and working class struggles. There are indications that this policy was not fully carried through, for instance in the discussions over the proposed 'entry paper' and the equivocal statement on revolutionary candidates in the elections, as well as in the ideological sense mentioned above. At the same time, some comrades were attempting to preserve the emphasis on direct action of Workers Fight's successful line of 1972, together with its political focus on the state and Tory repressive measures against the class, sometimes with absurd results such as the position put forward by Martin Thomas referred to earlier, which was of course dropped. No satisfactory substitute, however, was discovered for the 'General Strike to smash the Act' formula, despite such attempts. One of the results of this failure was a peculiar pessimism, almost amounting to political paralysis, in the face of the continuing Tory attack on the class in late 1973, through Phase 3, and the developing economic crisis. (The exception to this was of course WF's continuing leading role in the struggle over the Shrewsbury victimisations.) The first indication of this weakness was the line of acceptance of Phase 3, as if an inevitable fait accompli. This was severely criticised and soon reversed, but the tendency to fatalism and passivity persisted. Phase 3, it had been said, was perfectly tailored by the Tories to allow strong sections such as the miners substantial wage increases, while keeping down weaker and lower paid workers; the Tories couldn't lose. Almost immediately, the oil crisis shattered Britain's balance of payments, and provided the conditions which enabled the miners to smash through Phase 3 and the Tory government.

'General Strike to Smash the Act' had been, in 1972, 'in ringing consonance' with the mood of the working class and the objective political requirements of the situation during the Pentonville Five crisis. As the political and economic crisis deepened, and the Tory attacks on the working class mounted, the slogan was no longer adequate - a consequence in itself of its not being realised at the time, and the Industrial Relations Act and the Tories being left intact. No such slogan, in consonance with the situation, objective or subjective, was advanced by Workers Fight in 1973. But this was not because it was impossible to have done so - other political factors inhibited WF. Most prominent among these hindrances were the dogma of the 'ballot box trap' and factional opposition to the IMG. The appropriate slogan was, of course, 'General Strike to kick out the Tories'.

So, in 1973, when the stakes were higher than in 1972, Workers Fight seemed to lose its political nerve. The great merit of 'General strike to smash the Act' had been its linking of direct action to a definite political aim. Now, these two vital elements of a revolutionary strategy were split apart, and each seen as something existing in and for itself alone. Syndicalism and reformism took the place of a Marxist policy. Issues were cast around for which might again motivate a general strike situation - the Shrewsbury jailings, or a wage freeze... all failed to materialise. 'Vote Labour' - with appropriate

demands - was conceived as a purely electoral policy, entirely divorced from direct action over existing struggles. The miners' strike, when it came, almost seemed to take Workers Fight by surprise.

The reason why 'General Strike to Smash the Act' - or any other aspect of Tory repression - was no longer enough, was that the situation, and the class, had gone beyond that. The issue was no longer any single, particular, Tory Act, as in 1972, but the whole of the Tory government and its policies. Not only the Industrial Relations Act, but also the 1875 Conspiracy Act and the 1920 Emergency Powers Act were used to bash the unions and the militants. Phase 3 was followed by the three day week and three workers jailed for picketing. Clearly, the whole lot would have to go. Only a general strike could have swept away the Tories and all their works, and freed the three. The lead was given when the miners' strike inexorably followed from their overtime ban; to lead to the election and defeat of the Tories. What held us back?

Workers Fight correctly called for solidarity with the miners and the three jailed building workers, and for action against the three day week - but it did not see these as aspects of a political mobilisation which could throw out the Tories and more - when the election came, it was seen just as an opportunity to say vote Labour - and prepare to fight; not as a subordinate part of the struggles already being waged.

The miners knew that they could win, and they did, simply by staying out. In doing so, they also brought down the Tory government. How much more might have been achieved by a mass movement of working class solidarity, as in 1972, but with the declared aim of throwing the Tories out! But Workers Fight this time hesitated and refrained from calling for this kind of class political action, which could have not only broken the Tories but also their policies, now being continued under Labour management. And we were held back for the wrong political reasons. Two mistakes stood in our way.

First of all, the IMG. It is true that they have an abstract and rationalistic conception of 'the revolution' as process, and of the role of a 'central slogan' in a revolutionary strategy. But this does not mean that therefore they and all their slogans are always and automatically wrong. In fact, as I have argued, their call for a General Strike to kick the Tories out was right, in spite of their errors, just as our call for a General Strike to smash the Act was in 1972. And even these errors can be corrected, as their unrealistic and ultra-left attitudes to the Labour Party and government can be corrected by Workers Fight's superior analysis and tactics. But to reject the correct and necessary line simply because it is also the 'central slogan' of the IMG is immature and irresponsible factionalism.

The second weighty political objection to my argument in Workers Fight is the so-called 'ballot box trap' fallacy. This has been conveniently summarised by Martin Thomas as follows. "Mobilised in direct action, the working class is tremendously strong. It can gain substantial advances, and precisely by such a vigorous lead it can win the support of various other social layers. If, however, in a general strike situation, instead of going ahead to such advances, the working class allows itself to be diverted into an electoral contest, it will allow the ruling class to swing the relation of forces back in its favour, and it will probably lose the support of middle class layers. Isn't that what happened in France in 1968?" Well, no - and if it was, so what? Wouldn't the moral of the story have to be - you just can't win. In any revolutionary situation, the ruling class only has to call a general election, and they're saved - or else you must boycott all elections. No - we must call their bluff. The miners understood this, if Workers Fight didn't. Compare France 1968 and Britain 1974. In France, the workers, thanks to the 'leadership' of the CP, first of all lost the general strike, and then the election. In Britain, the miners, almost by themselves, first got rid of the Tories, then won the strike. Take your choice - and let no one deny that much more could have been won in both instances, given a revolutionary leadership. Yes - a general strike can lead to almost unlimited possibilities of working class power, including a workers' government and a workers' state. But that by no means rules out, as one of the very first steps, and far from the last, removing the existing regime - does it? Scrap the ballot box trap!

NOTES ON THE SITUATION IN INDOCHINA

Martin Thomas

These notes were written on 1st November 1973 and presented to the Steering Committee and to NC members soon afterwards. I have added short updating comments in places.

1. Indochina and the Permanent Revolution

Nowhere could it be more clearly shown that capitalism in its epoch of decay is incapable of solving any of the basic problems of the poverty-stricken masses of the world.

In Vietnam as a whole the overall per capita food availability had, in 1964, diminished by 48% from before world war 2. In Saigon, the official government standard-of-living index for skilled workers dropped from 197 in June 1960 to 166 in June 1972 and was falling rapidly. In 1973, the price of rice in South Vietnam has gone up 75%, other commodities more, everything at least 50%. The piastre has been devalued seven times this year.

In Cochin China, in 1964, 6000 landlords (mostly absentees) owned 45% of the rice land; 180,000 smallholders owned 15%. In war conditions, it is difficult to give exact figures for who owns what. It can be said with certainty that the various government 'land reforms' in the South have had no real effect. About 30% of the peasants in the South are tenants paying rents of up to 60% or more of their crops to absentee landlords.

In 1964, "in a population of more than 14 million (in the South), only 4.8 million out of 9 million potential workers are employed; of those, 3.9 million are in agriculture" and 600,000 in the army and administration (B. Fall) Today, 1.5 million people, fully one-third of the workforce, are in unproductive jobs on the government payroll. The army and the police together include about 1 million men. Other important 'occupational classifications' include over 600,000 in refugee camps, 200,000 political prisoners, and up to half a million prostitutes. Unemployment is at least 12% in Saigon and far higher in other cities. The Government enterprises which provide 40% of the industrial output function very largely as a pork-barrel for top managers.

Of the gross domestic product, manufacturing accounted for only 4% in 1969, while "public administration and defence" took 22%. "Defence and administration" has habitually taken 80% of the government budget. In the 1974 budget - expanded by 50% beyond the 1973 budget - it still takes about half. 40% of the government budget is covered by US aid, but there is still estimated to be a \$350 m. deficit on the \$1200 m. budget. The massive economic difficulties are currently increased further by the loss of \$300 m. in local spending by US forces.

Approximate trade figures for 1972 were: exports \$17.5 m., imports \$321 m. The deficit is covered by US aid.

Cambodia and Laos reproduce similar situations, on a smaller scale. (The population of Cambodia is about 7 m., and of Laos about 3 m., compared to South Vietnam's 19 m.)

The representatives of advanced bourgeois civilisation, the USA, have poured in thousands of millions of dollars in aid.. not, however, to solve the problems of the people of Indochina, but to prevent the solution. The bourgeoisie has shown itself incapable. The peasantry - even though it fights heroically, even though it makes up the main fighting force of the revolution - cannot raise itself to the position of ruling class. There is no way out for Indochina but socialist revolution. And, precisely to prevent the world chain of imperialism snapping at this weak link, US imperialism does all in its power to block that way out.

There is in Indochina, though, no heavy industrial proletariat, of the type crucial to the permanent revolution in Russia in 1917. The working class certainly exists - in late 1971 strike action once again flared, after being stifled for a while by the Thieu police regime. Among the vast army of

government employees, some are literally bought off by imperialism. Not all - as can be seen from the example of the teachers in Cambodia, whose strikes and demonstrations forced a state of emergency in March this year.

Meanwhile the decay of imperialism has created a vast mass of rural and urban dispossessed - 'semi-proletarians' who have nothing to lose but their chains, and who are not firmly committed to private property.

The role of imperialism has also given the relation of town and country a different content from the 'classical' Russian model. Sihanouk does not tell the whole story, but he gives an important part: "The NLF and the North Vietnamese forces are far stronger than our FALPNK, but in spite of their heroism and armoured forces they have been unable to liberate Hue, Kontum, Tay Ninh or An Loc, nor have they even been able to maintain their position in Quang Tri. The only result of their attempt to liberate the large cities of South Vietnam has been the terrible destruction of these cities with their large civilian population". The US forces did not hesitate to raze Hue in order to take it back from the NLF. The state in Indochina rests almost exclusively on open violence and open bribery.

Finally, the role of imperialism concentrates the forces of reaction in a tight cluster round the US honeypot. The French colonisation in its impact on an archaic social structure prevented the development of any 'national bourgeoisie' of the least importance. No native Vietnamese employer has ever employed more than 200 workers.

These factors are basic to understanding why the Indochinese revolution has taken the form of prolonged people's war, mainly in the countryside. And it would be absolutely wrong to underestimate the importance of this people's war, or its significance in inspiring revolutionaries elsewhere.

Already at the Second Congress of the Communist International, Lenin pointed out that the experience of the pre-capitalist parts of the USSR had shown "It is possible.. to awaken independent political thought and activity even in those countries where there is almost no proletariat", and proposed the slogan of Peasant Soviets.

That does not tell the whole story, though. The whole subsequent development has been conditioned by the defeat of 1945/46. And to look to a simple repetition of the Cuban or the Chinese model of permanent revolution would be wrong.

At present, US imperialism is neither hard-pressed to the point of no being able to intervene at all (as in China 1949) nor taken unawares (as in Cuba 1959/60). The Thieu regime, fuelled with massive US aid, is not the house of cards the Chiang or Batista regimes were. Nor can we place trust on the possibility of the NLF leadership going through the ideological evolution traversed by the Castro leadership. Apart from anything else, it is closely tied to an existing state apparatus (in the DRV) which suffers the normal tendency to conservatism of any established bureaucracy.

Moreover, "the US war in South Vietnam has brought about a sociological upheaval without precedent in the whole history of Vietnam... (Saigon), saturated at 500,000 inhabitants, has seen its population doubling since 1966, increasing from 2 to 4 million inhabitants. One used to speak of the Vietnamese population being 90% peasants. That reality belongs to the past. Half the population of South Vietnam is 'urbanised'" (C. Paulet, Quatrieme Internationale July 1972).

That is the lasting impact of 'Vietnamisation'. But a similar process has taken place in Cambodia, though not to the same extent in Laos. Phnom Penh today takes in some 1.5 million of the 7 million population of Cambodia - though its population in 1962 was only 400,000.

The NLF's reported attempt to combat this by "gaining control of rural production and thus encouraging bit by bit the return to the land of an increasing number of urban unemployed" is a gradualist utopia.

The towns cannot fall to the liberation forces until they have a massive superiority in the countryside. But fall they must. And the liberation forces must be able to reorganise the towns once they take them. The working class must come forward on the scene.

2. 1945/46.

In August 1945, with the Japanese surrender, the Popular Front Vietminh took over the whole country and set up the DRV, without much struggle. But the Stalinist view of the 'democracies' persuaded them to welcome British troops (allies in the world war) into Saigon. Within a month they had scraped together all the old French colonialist soldiers and administrators they could and made a coup to reinstate the French in Saigon. Despite this lesson, the Vietminh government in Hanoi made an Accord with the French in March 1946 (only 6 months later) which allowed French troops into Hanoi. Growing clashes between the French troops and the Vietminh culminated in the unrestrained shelling of Haiphong by the French, and in December 1946 they took Hanoi and forced the Vietminh back into the countryside as a guerrilla force; it was not until 1954 that the North was regained for the DRV.

The Trotskyists vigorously opposed any imperialist presence, and campaigned for radical land reform. Their opposition to the British provoked the first assassinations of Trotskyists. In autumn 1945, Ta Thu Thau, the main Trotskyist leader, was murdered by Stalinists. In 1946, when they opposed the Accord with the French, the Trotskyist forces were finally exterminated by a Stalinist onslaught, reportedly under the direction of Giap.

This eclipse of independent working class politics conditioned the long detour of the Indochinese revolution.

3. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

After the victory of Dien Bien Phu in 1954 the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was firmly established in the North.

Up to 1953, the Stalinists had confined land reform to: confiscation of the land of 'traitors'; 25 % reduction of rents; reduction of rate of interest on debts. From 1953 on they turned to radical land reform. In 1956 there was a considerable peasant uprising in Nghe-An against the land reform. The details of this are not at all clear, but it is likely that it resulted from excessive roughness against so-called 'landlords' who were in fact no more than slightly richer than average peasants. Land distribution in the North before the revolution was by no means so inequitable as in the South ('large landowners' owned 20% of the land in Tonkin and 10% in Annam, as against 45% in Cochin China, by 1930 figures; and Stalinist figures for the land reform show that those classified as 'landlords' owned an average of only 1.6 acres each before the reform!) From 1958, co-operatives were established. Apparently learning the lessons of China's experience, progress was gradual and no attempt to was made to introduce communes. By March 1963 88% of rural families were in co-operatives.

Between 1955 and 1957 the major capitalist interests in the North - almost all French-owned - were expropriated (with no compensation, with the one exception of the Tonkin coal mines, where compensation was very small). From 1958, a planned economy was introduced - though difficulties of reconstruction, and, later, war, have made the planning at best approximate. The industry of the DRV is still small scale, technically primitive, and mostly rural (partly through deliberate decision of decentralisation to avoid the bombing). It is almost entirely oriented to the war effort and to agriculture's needs. 90% of the population is rural.

Even in July 1954, Ho still envisaged remaining within the French Union.. but no compromise was possible. The old colonial state structure had already in the course of the war been largely supplanted by a Vietminh 'parallel hierarchy'. The new state structure could operate only on the basis of expropriation and planned economy.

We characterise the DRV as a deformed workers' state. It is the task of every revolutionary internationalist to defend this state against imperialism.

The overthrow of capitalism and feudalism in North Vietnam has permitted it to avoid the grotesque parasitism and decay of the South, of Cambodia, of Laos, of Thailand - and also to bring real advances. There has been no tremendous economic growth - no surprise, under the US bombing. But no-one starves. There is almost 100% literacy. Every sizable provincial centre has a hospital. In the liberated areas of South Vietnam, every village has a primary school and a doctor. In Laos, by comparison, there is 20% literacy and around 17 doctors in the whole country under RIG control.

Major efforts have been made to diversify the economy, and the dependence on foreign aid has been sharply reduced - from 65% of the budget in 1955 to 15% in 1965.

But: "... this revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew" (Marx/Engels). In North Vietnam it was possible to overthrow the old ruling class without the fully developed self-activity of the working class; indeed, despite the annihilation in 1946 of fully conscious proletarian politics. The result is a State without workers' democracy, a deformed workers' state.

This deformation has had its consequences for the whole struggle in Indochina. It has thus hindered the extension of the revolution necessary if the DRV is to go beyond its primitive war/subsistence economy level. Trotskyists, revolutionary internationalists, therefore stand for the completion of the revolution in the DRV, for a state of workers' and peasants' Soviets. In the light of the experience of 1945/46; of the state repression against the peasantry in 1956 and against intellectuals in the DRV's short-lived "hundred flowers" period (also in 1956) - we must expect armed resistance from the DRV bureaucracy. We define the completion, therefore, as a political revolution.

4. Stalinism and the Indochinese revolution.

The involvement of both Moscow and Peking in Indochina has been entirely within the framework of 'peaceful coexistence'. They have never hesitated to sell out the Indochinese revolution in return for narrow, short-term bureaucratic self-interest. They bear the major political responsibility for all the recent setbacks of the liberation forces.

Informed bourgeois sources have even suggested that the Chinese bureaucracy is actively opposed to the success of the Indochinese revolution. Chou en-lai told Japanese parliamentarians on January 28, 1973, that Washington and Peking had agreed not to seek hegemony in Asia and the Pacific. The Far Eastern Economic Review (5 February 1973) commented that China "would rather have four Balkanised states in Indochina than an Indochina that was dominated by Hanoi, and possibly susceptible to Moscow." More than fear of Moscow, we may suppose the Chinese bureaucracy's motives to be fear of a living revolution on its borders, arousing the Chinese masses.

As for the leadership of the DRV, there can be no doubt that they have fought heroically and are sincerely devoted to the revolution. Devoted, however, within the framework of a Stalinist outlook. In January 1957, the North Vietnamese National Assembly declared that the 'struggle for unification' would have to be 'preceded' by the 'consolidation' of Socialism in the North (i.e. 'socialism in one country' rather than permanent revolution). The struggle in the south started again despite, or at least without, them. Not until the US started bombing the North on 7 February 1965 did they commit substantial forces to the South.

On the critical question of reunification of Vietnam, the programme of the NLF is for "reunification... step by step and through peaceful means on the principle of negotiation between the two zones..". In June this year, DRV leaders were reported as saying that they thought reunification would come, but "we are

not going to press the question". The DRV's approach to the settlements of January 1973 and after has also been marked by Stalinist concepts - notably, secret diplomacy, and describing compromises as glorious victories.

It is well known that the programme of the National Liberation Front is not socialist. It is less well-known that the programme does not even extend to full completion of the bourgeois-democratic tasks. We have already quoted from it on reunification. On land reform the programme states: "The State will negotiate the purchase of land from landlords who possess land upward of a certain amount varying with the situation in each locality; it will allot these lands to landless or land-poor peasants... In areas where the required conditions (??) for land-reform do not yet obtain land rent will be reduced."

Now it is a fact that in the liberated areas the NLF has gone beyond this programme... to the extent that the landlords have usually fled from the NLF-occupied regions. The NLF and the South Vietnamese CP, though, remain within the bounds of Stalinist ideology. They fight heroically - but it is not only Marxists who know how to fight and die for the revolution.

The Provisional Revolutionary Government includes only three or four CP members among its 23. Eight members of the PRG, for example, belong to the "Alliance of National Democratic and Peace Forces" created in April 1968 by non-communist intellectuals who broke with the Thieu regime but did not join the NLF. Here we have an alliance with the shadow of a bourgeoisie which is itself a shadow.

It is not possible to know whether or not the report of a rebellion of 1000 NLF fighters (including CP leaders) in November 1972 against the 'soft line' of the PRG leadership is true. Certainly the question is not settled by the 'refutation' by the Stalinist hack journalist Wilfred Burchett. We can say, however, that although we support the PRG unconditionally against Thieu and against American imperialism, it is a popular front; we would give it no political confidence; we would support any genuine popular rebellion against it*

The same basic policy applies to the Pathet Lao and to the FUNK/GRUNK.

5. The 1973 Paris Accords.

The settlement proclaimed a cease-fire, with the PRG and Thieu each remaining in control of the areas of South Vietnam occupied by them as of 27 January. This meant that the PRG controlled 30% or more of the land area of South Vietnam, but little more than 10% of the population.

* NOTE: Obviously we would not regard, for example, Thieu-organised 'Black Hundred' type action or Catholic-inspired anti-communist riots (or chauvinist anti-Vietnamese riots in Cambodia demagogically directed against the GRUNK) as "genuine popular" movements to be supported.

Beyond that, what is possible?

A) Genuine working class revolt. This we obviously support.

B) A Vendee. This can be excluded in the given social/historical situation.

C) A 'kulak rebellion'. This can be practically excluded on the grounds of the absence of any substantial kulak class in Vietnam, and the PRG's known moderation in land reform.

D) Revolt by peasant or semi-proletarian elements against administrators (tax collectors, etc.) Obviously we can't support refusal to pay taxes to the PRG. But if people who have experienced the Diem, Ky, Thieu, etc regimes revolt against PRG administration (which is improbable) we can be virtually sure they have some just cause.

E) Peasant rebellion demanding land reform, or more radical land reform, opposed to the PRG's moderate line. Surely we must support this.

F) Revolt against some compromise with Thieu and/or with the US. In the case of local revolt against some compromise made necessary by the overall relation of forces, support would not be automatic. In the case of widespread revolt, the compromise was evidently not necessary.

All US military forces were to be withdrawn from South Vietnam within 60 days of the ceasefire. New military materials to the South from either side are prohibited, but replacements of used-up or worn-out materials were permitted. Prisoners of war to be exchanged. Eventually, free elections were to decide the future of South Vietnam.

To quote further clauses in detail would not have much meaning, since most aren't worth the paper they are written on. Thieu's police state is supposed to guarantee all the usual democratic liberties. While the US was raining down 5000 tons of bombs per day on Cambodia, it was supposed to be "respecting Cambodia's territorial integrity and sovereignty".

The accords marked a setback. US planes had already struck at the dykes of the North, without strong Soviet or Chinese reaction. If they had gone ahead with a full-scale attack, the economy of the DRV would have been totally destroyed. The DRV was forced to agree by the treachery of Moscow and Peking.

The fact that the US had to abandon hopes of reconquering the North, and even cede a portion of the South to the NLF, was a victory. But that victory had already essentially been won by the Tet offensive in 1968. The US gave up all hopes of total military victory then. Given that, the fact that cease-fire was declared with the Thieu regime still in place - and stronger than the Southern regime has ever been since 1965, though that's not saying much - was a setback. The essential points of the agreement are not even widely different from points proposed by MacNamara in 1965.

Obviously we expose every violation of the accords by the US, to contrast their pretence of defending justice and liberty with their actual barbarity. But to campaign for the US and Thieu to keep the accords is nonsense; all it can do is raise illusions in the accords.

The fighting continues (and still so today, April 1974). The US still has 10,000 alleged 'civil advisors' in Vietnam. In May 1973 fighting was "scarcely less intense than it was before the ceasefire". The NLF alleged renewed US bombing in the South. In June 1973 Saigon reckoned 50 deaths a day in the Mekong delta. In July 1973 the NLF launched a big offensive in Kontum province. In September Saigon reckoned 130 deaths a day since June. On 22 September the NLF seized the Le Minh base, and a Saigon spokesman commented "under the circumstances any intervention by the US Air Force cannot be considered a violation of the Paris Peace Agreements". Nixon had already made threats of renewed full-scale bombing as early as March.

Since the ceasefire, Saigon has received (by PRG figures) 500,000 tons of US arms and munitions, 500 aeroplanes, 600 armoured vehicles, and 600 pieces of artillery.

The NLF have not kept to the accords. We defend fully their right to break the accords: we advocate they should break the accords.

Their statements show that the Hanoi leaders are not blind to the possibility of full-scale war resuming soon. However, it seems that their hopes are banked on a substantial breathing space. They are making plans for reconstruction and seeking links with capitalist countries to aid in this (as of course they are perfectly correct in principle to do). The gradualist policy in South Vietnam and in Cambodia also fits in with the 'breathing space' perspective. (As does the recently-published - March 1974 - report to the Hanoi National Assembly).

For the moment, both Nixon and Thieu are equally preoccupied by 'breathing space'.

6. Cambodia.

Cambodia is - or was - largely a subsistence economy, with most peasants owning their land, no large landowner class, and little industry.

On the Japanese withdrawal in 1945 independence was declared in Cambodia as in Laos and Vietnam, but the British troops swiftly invaded and

from 1946 to 1954 Cambodia was involved in the Indochinese war. An alliance was established between the nationalist movements - the Vietminh, the Lao Issara (which became the Neo Lao Hak Sat, the political wing of the Pathet Lao, in 1956), and the Khmer Issarak in Cambodia. The Cambodian CP was founded in that period, as was the Khmer Rouge (originally as part of the Vietminh).

Sihanouk (monarch since 1941) used the Khmer Rouge 'threat' to persuade France to grant independence, which came at the 1954 Geneva conference.

Sihanouk steered a careful 'neutralist' line for 16 years, and earned himself Hanoi's approval and the suspension of the CP's activity. (Guerrilla activity came from the right-wing, Thailand-based Khmer Serei). But the balancing act began to break down in 1964. He nationalised all foreign trade, thus creating a grouping of rich opponents who had lost their source of income.

In late 1966 student demonstrators protested against the selection of a right-wing government under Lon Nol. By early 1967, armed struggle was underway in Battambang province. In early 1969, Sihanouk had to admit that some areas were controlled by the Khmer Rouge.

The question of the 'Ho Chi Minh' trail used by the DRV to get supplies to South Vietnam and of NLF sanctuaries in Cambodia increasingly made Sihanouk's 'neutralist' line impossible. We now know that he endorsed US bombings over Cambodia in 1969 and 1970.

But in March 1970 Sihanouk was ousted by an evidently US-backed coup under Lon Nol. (The Khmer Serei forces rallied to this new regime in May). Sihanouk, from Peking, announced the FUNK (National Unity Front of Cambodia) on March 23. He was at once backed by the Khmer Rouge. Peking for a while tried fruitlessly to come to an agreement with Lon Nol, then finally, after Nixon invaded eastern Cambodia on April 30 (ostensibly to destroy the "NLF HQ" there) declared itself in support of FUNK. (May 3)

It is important not to blind ourselves to the essence of the matter. Despite the archaic ideological trappings of Sihanouk's FUNK and "Royal Government of National Unity of Cambodia", they represent a genuine popular movement against imperialism - and one of an almost entirely plebeian character. (The major section of the small Cambodian proletariat - the rubber plantation workers - has a tradition of support for the Khmer Rouge). We must support them against Lon Nol and the US.

Sihanouk's relation to the struggle is well described by Sihanouk himself. "The Khmer Rouge are masters of their part of Cambodia; Lon Nol has his part. Here I am, sitting in a borrowed villa". Still, we are not monarchists, not even in Cambodia.

The Khmer Rouge is estimated to have had forces of about 3000 in 1970. By late July 1973 it was up to 50,000 and controlled about 80% of the territory and 50% of the population.

The Lon Nol regime has never managed to conquer any real popular base. Its corruption is fantastic. In December 1972 Lon Nol admitted that 100,000 of the supposedly 250,000 strong army existed only on paper - so that their commanders could pocket the extra wages! It has been estimated that 30,000 of the remaining 150,000 may be "non-existent" too. Even the soldiers who do exist don't always get paid. In May 500 soldiers demonstrated in the streets of Phnom Penh for two months' back pay they had not received. The desertion rate is enormous. In July/August the price of rice in Phnom Penh increased 250% in seven weeks. Lon Nol is reported to have \$92 million in Swiss banks.

Meanwhile, US domestic pressure forced Nixon to halt bombing of Cambodia on 15 August. But there was "... a baffling change of direction by the insurgents. Having taken the full brunt of intensive bombing for more than two months since their June offensive, they eased their pressure on the capital only days before the bombing was due to stop". (Far Eastern Economic Review, 20 August 73). The rainy season started in late September. And since then talk has been of the struggle lasting for years rather than months.

One reason why Cambodia, unlike Vietnam and Laos, has seen no negoti-

ations yet is that the Lon Nol regime is even weaker than Souvanna Phouma or Thieu, Lon Nol said in July that he, for his part, was willing to talk. But clearly the resistance forces have no good reason to settle for less than total victory.

Another reason, probably, is that the resistance forces are less united. Sihanouk and the Khmer Rouge leaders have their different ambitions and projects. For that same reason, it would be wise to believe all that Sihanouk has said.

He has made some hard factual statements, though, which have gone without contradiction. From these we can reconstruct an explanation of the "baffling change of direction". As part of the Paris settlement, as part of the price for the bombing halt and for \$ 2500 million US aid over the next five years, and under pressure from Moscow and Peking, Hanoi agreed to restrain Khmer Rouge activity. As long as the Ho Chi Minh trail is kept open, this restraint would not immediately harm the Vietnamese struggle.

The alternative explanation advanced in Rouge (19 October 73) is little other than the same thing from a different angle: "if complete victory came too rapidly in Cambodia, it would accelerate the rhythm in south Vietnam too much".

Another possible explanation, hinted at by Rouge, is that the Khmer Rouge were daunted by the problems of what to do with the economically chaotic city of Phnom Penh once they capture it. The problems are real. But can we really believe that the Khmer Rouge - part of the same front that launched the Tet offensive - are so timid and defeatist?

(Developments in early 1974 fitted in with this pattern. In WF 42 (2 Feb.) we reported:....)

As from the end of December, the Khmer Rouge have been making heavy artillery attacks on Phnom Penh. It is certainly true that these bombardments are having a demoralising effect on the bourgeoisie of Phnom Penh, many of whom are making preparations to evacuate. Still, the Khmer Rouge tactics do raise doubts.

For the bulk of the two million population of Phnom Penh (nearly one third of the total population of Cambodia) a call to rise up against Lon Nol, backed up with organisation, would be better than the continual bombardments (using up a great deal of munitions) and appeals to leave the city which they currently receive from the Khmer Rouge. It may be that what is involved is a drive to force the creation of a 'national democratic' regime with the toleration of US imperialism, rather than an all-out offensive to kick out imperialism altogether.

(Since February, the bombardments have stopped and Khmer Rouge activity has dropped. GRUNK communique, however, forecast final victory for May or June.)

7. The Laos Agreement.

On 22 February 1973, an agreement for a ceasefire and coalition government in Laos was signed. From about the end of April, war ceased. A rightist coup in August failed completely. A protocol signed on 14 September provided that Souvanna Phouma is to continue as prime minister in Vientiane - although the Pathet Lao controls 80% of the country. It is reported that the way was cleared for agreement "by a Soviet pledge to support neutralist Prince Souvanna and to refrain from partisan support for the Pathet Lao".

The capital, Vientiane, is to be policed by forces taken from both sides. The first planeloads of Pathet Lao soldiers, policemen, and cadres landed in Vientiane late in October. (And the process has continued fairly smoothly since then).

The coalition agreement will probably be short-lived. American planners envisage using American aid money (at present \$ 50 m. per year, and not at all likely to decrease) to win elections if they happen. The agreement could then collapse in the same way as the 1957 agreement, when in May 1959 the Royal Lao Government ordered two battalions of former Pathet Lao to surrender their arms and in December 1959 a CIA-backed coup brought Phoumi Nosavan to power.

Alternatively, the right wing could wait until the Pathet Lao had discredited itself trying to run the decaying regime, and then stage a coup as after the 1962 agreement.

The ceasefire in Vietnam may have been a necessary compromise for the Vietnamese masses. But under no circumstances does the Laos agreement solve anything for the people of Laos.

8. Thailand.

Thailand is the major US garrison in South-East Asia. There are still some 38,000 US troops and 500 planes there. The US government is the second largest employer after the Thai government, and corruption flourishes as elsewhere. The deposed Field-Marshal Prapas was reckoned to be the sixth richest man in the world.

The mass student revolt (round the demand for a constitution) which toppled the Government on 14 October 1973 has led to another right-wing government. The King has improved his position. The leading elements in the army who permitted the overthrow by refusing to back Thanom and Prapas against the students probably see the rebellion as a useful opportunity to broaden out the base of power and privilege. The DRV's hope that the overthrow will "change the policy of (the) country and make Thailand a really independent and democratic state" (Nhan Dan) is misguided.

But the mass discontent - which has been welling up for years - will not stop here. The grossly mis-developed, unequal society of Thailand is not a stable one. A further extension of revolutionary struggle in Indochina might well spark flames in Thailand.

(A powerful and wide-spread strike movement, mainly round demands for wage increases, has already developed, despite laws making unions illegal).

9. Perspectives.

If there were a situation with no way out for the bourgeoisie, this would be it. But there is no such situation.

Capitalism can admit no serious solution to the problems of the area, no long-term stabilisation. There are various ways, though, in which the decay and oppression might be prolonged.

A) 'Popular Front' governments are allowed to take power and to discredit themselves in the economic chaos resulting from withdrawal of US aid. (Probably only partial withdrawal, a residue being kept as guarantee of the safety of imperialist property in the area). The armed masses are at least partially demobilised. A right wing coup is then engineered (an 'Indonesian solution').

The difficulty is that the Indochinese revolutionaries - whatever else they have done or not done - have generally shown themselves extremely vigilant in the matter of maintaining independent armed forces. But it cannot be excluded. The Indonesian CP was armed in 1945. The Khmer Rouge was demobilised in 1954. War weariness does exist, even in Vietnam.

B) A 'Nasserite' or 'peruvian' (or 'Algerian') solution - a military grouping takes power on a programme of radical reforms (within bourgeois limits) together with repression/cooption of the left. This appears to be what the US may have had in mind at times in the '60s, in South Vietnam. The problem is simply that some relative degree of integrity is required for the 'Nasser' or 'Velasco' and nowhere in Indochina can that be found. In Peru or Egypt there was some national bourgeoisie with some 'bourgeois virtues'; in Indochina, none. Moreover, neither Nasser nor Velasco faced a task of the magnitude of containing/repressing a virtual people in arms.

Still, should, for example, the Thieu regime succeed in gaining some breathing space and making use of it (Thieu is making some 'reformist' gestures, at least) this possibility also is not entirely excluded.

C) In desperation, the US might allow the NLF (or Khmer Rouge, or Pathet Lao) to come to power, and hope by means of manipulating aid strings to keep it within its stated programme. But: in the first place, the possibility of keeping within bourgeois limits will be no less narrow than it was for the DRV in 1954 - less so, with the neighbouring DRV as a model. In the second place, this solution runs so far counter to the normal ideological conceptions of even the most hard-headed US politician as to scarcely enter their considerations.

The improbability of this event is shown by the fact that there is no 'model' to compare. The nearest comparison is Bolivia, 1952/3: where the old state

apparatus was largely supplanted and nationalisations and radical land reform measures took place - but the process was halted short of workers' power, and step by step repression took the reforms back.

D) Or the US may indeed "bomb North Vietnam (or Cambodia, or Laos) back into the Stone Age". Nixon may raze Phnom Penh if the Khmer Rouge take it. The possibility of this depends on the international solidarity movement.

The possibility of the US government 'disengaging' under the pressure of domestic crisis, the NLF consequently taking power, and an 'objectivist' Permanent Revolution dynamic developing with the model of the DRV, is not at all excluded. The PRG regime, despite its Popular Front character, may evolve into a workers' state - on the Yugoslavia/China/Czechoslovakia pattern. We must be prepared to recognise and support any such development without dogmatism or sectarianism.

Even in the case of this 'objectivist' permanent revolution dynamic, though, it cannot be automatically assumed that the future regime will have the same political make-up as the present NLF. The revolution may have its Guevaras and its Escalantes... Urban revolt is likely, and may create movements outside the framework of the NLF. The task of 'reconstruction' in the hydrocephalic cities of Indochina will require the most energetic, bold, and decisive policy if it is not to collapse in chaos: rapid and sweeping land reform, redevelopment of agriculture, immediate nationalisations and massive projects of public works, thorough purge and rationalisation of bureaucracy. A different political line from that of the present NLF is required.

But: "... one can 'scientifically' foresee only the struggle, but not the concrete moments of the struggle". And present policies must be based on present realities. Solidarity remains a primary task, irrespective of any criticism of the Indochinese revolutionaries: on a propaganda level in times like the present, in agitation and action when and as soon as possible.

As regards the tasks in Indochina, we stand for the building of an independent communist-internationalist party: which will reject all illusions in 'neutralist' regimes (Sihanouk, the new Thai regime, etc); fight against Popular-Frontism and any reliance on or confidence in the Soviet Union or the People's Republic of China; will arm itself (no more 1946s!) and constantly agitate for the continued arming of the masses; will join with the NLF in action against Thieu and US imperialism while giving no political support to the PRG; will stand for expropriation of all capitalists and landlords, thorough-going land reform, and a state based on workers' and peasants' Soviets.

10. The Fourth International and Indochina.

The resolution on "The Vietnamese Revolution" passed by the December/¹⁹⁷² plenum of the IEC of the Fourth International is a document of evasions. It (implicitly) characterises the PRG as a "Workers' and Peasants' Government", on the basis of how it might develop under one variant. It states that "All indications are that the cadres of the NLF and the VCP are systematically preparing the South Vietnamese population for this mass political struggle" (for various democratic demands) - without any clear assessment of the class content of the political struggle carried on by the NLF and VCP. It sees the permanent revolution in Indochina as an automatic process, with the "principal aim" of possible revolutionary Marxist intervention being one "of deepening the permanent revolution in South Vietnam and of helping (!) it attain final victory.

In effect, the FI takes one optimistic variant (it may be the most probable variant; nevertheless, one variant) and bases its attitude on vulgar speculations and hopes.

The logic of the December resolution is liquidationist. The major section of the FI majority, the former Ligue Communiste, has taken this logic further. It renounces the call for political revolution in the DRV. It characterises the VCP as non-Stalinist - effectively as a proletarian political party. (And now the ex-Ligue has virtually openly welcomed the prospect of a monarchist coalition government in Laos, despite a contrary, if vague, line in the IEC resolution).

Interpreting the frankly opportunist statements of the Vietnamese CP as 'soft soap', they have themselves been taken in by that 'soft soap'. This has harmed the FI's work of conveying the lesson of revolutionary direct action from the Indochinese struggle, & of solidarity - work whose vigour we should otherwise take as a model to emulate. Rouge has called for support for the Hanoi 7-point peace plan, and later for US and Thieu to implement the 1973 accords - demands which can only obscure the principled issue of self-determination. □

FURTHER BRIEFING ON THE IMG.

Martin Thomas.

I have been asked to write some brief notes updating the information on the IMG given in Internal Bulletin 14 part 2, for the benefit of comrades who are working with the IMG and find its gyrations confusing.

I do not have a clear picture of the political demarcations within the IMG - but neither, I suspect, do most members of the IMG. All the factions and tendencies are (I believe) fundamentally cliques - with the exception of the pro-SWP tendency, which has a definite ideological basis but is almost entirely un-integrated in the IMG, and the majority tendency, which is better described as a cult.

In recent months, the IMG has grown rapidly (up to 100 recruits per month), and the majority tendency has consolidated its hold. The method of Ross (the leader of the majority) has been described as "eclecticism elevated into a world outlook". Every idea going is gobbled up and put out again in a peculiar Rossite form; that is the reason for the wild confusion of miscellaneous ideas in the IMG's output. (Repeal of the 1875 Conspiracy Act; unionisation of the police; a register of flying pickets (!); action committees in each industry to prepare plans for nationalisation; a general strike to implement socialist measures; Labour to form a government in disregard of the Constitution while Heath remains in Downing Street... all these, and more, have briefly been put forward as principal slogans by the IMG). This method of Ross's is one reason why the internal life of the IMG is so confused.

In a sense, the whole organisation is a cult, round the abstraction of "the Fourth International". Both the European Perspectives Document and the USFI Perspectives for Britain were accepted by all tendencies but the pro-SWP, even though the latter document polemicised more or less openly against Ross! Most tendencies accepted the 'General Strike to kick the Tories out' slogan - but each had its own interpretation. This makes the internal life even more confused.

There is also increasing bureaucratisation.

Each faction or tendency usually has positions on virtually everything from the dialectics of nature to the details of the IMG's organisation. Obviously most IMG members can't and don't work out their ideas independently on all these issues.. they simply take a "package deal" of positions by joining a particular faction. Disputes may explode over the most arcane or petty issues.

Given that background, we can update the information on the various factions from that given in I.B. 14 part 2. The New Course was dissolved a couple of weeks before the World Congress, largely because of pressure from the international leadership for solidarity against the LTF ("Leninist-Trotskyist Faction"- the international faction led by the SWP). The New Course has declined considerably since the spring 1973 conference, but it is still the major opposition grouping, including perhaps 25% of the IMG membership and nearly all its prominent political figures bar Ross (Tariq Ali, Jordan, Gowan, Purdie...) The factional hostility between the New Course and the majority seems to have increased, if anything, since the formal dissolution of the New Course: there is certainly a great deal of discontent in the IMG on account of the IMG's eccentric line round the elections.

Some New Course people are very dissatisfied with the IMG, but the tendency as a whole is a "moderate" opposition; its staple diet is objections to Ross's wildest flights of absurdity.

Robin Blackburn, having joined the New Course during the spring 1973 conference, put out a separate document for the December 1973 conference, and has now formed his own (very small) tendency. He criticises the majority for adaptations to syndicalism, and his own line is centred around the concept of a "united front with the Labour Party" (which he doesn't explain at all clearly). See his New Left Review article on Heath (in particular one footnote, for his peculiar definition of politics, which categorises what Lenin called "trade-unionist politics" as not political) and his New Statesman article.

The leading members of the JAB tendency have now left the IMG. We have had friendly contact with some members of this tendency in the past, but we don't know on what basis the leading people have left the IMG, or whether they have taken anybody with them. They seem to have some Healyite leanings, though they did (together with the New Course) put up a principled opposition to the Rossite liquidation of the AIL into the Troops Out Movement.

Likewise the leading figure of the LOT tendency, T. Whelan, has left the IMG. His tendency was formally dissolved some time ago, but his ideas still have some influence. He still defends much of the 1972 "new thinking", including the IMG's tactics in the 1972 Manchester engineers' struggle, but seems to largely agree with us on policies right now.

With the 'General Strike to kick the Tories out' "umbrella" gone, centrifugal tendencies are likely to appear in the IMG, as they cast around for a new line. Not every member of the IMG will be happy with the pledge to call for strike action against any attempt to unseat the Labour government (RW 29 March - as if the Labour government were a workers' government!), or the equation of that government with the Allende government (as if the British ruling class is about to effect a fascist coup to avoid revolutionary upheaval!) Don't expect oppositionists to wear the fact on their sleeves, though. Most IMG members, even if they are in opposition, are able to put out the standard line quite smoothly - but doubts can be brought to the surface by persistent questioning, & refusing to be taken in by impressive-sounding phrases.

* * * * *

"CONCERNING THE PRESENT SITUATION" - A REPLY

In his article in the last IB, RR accuses me of allying myself with bourgeois economists and political commentators, slavishly following the capitalists and being guided by appearances. Before looking in detail at RR's attempts to substantiate these charges, just a word about the Marxist and bourgeois methods in general.

The fact is that RR's despised bourgeois economists have infinitely more sophisticated methods of making short term predictions about the economy than we do. They have at their finger-tips statistical offices for collecting information, machinery on which to store it and publications to disseminate it. As far as information is concerned (and short-term predictions depend on information) we have to content ourselves with the crumbs from the bourgeois table, since many of the important publications have a restricted circulation and are simply not available.

The information which Marxists need inevitably comes from bourgeois sources, as anyone who has read Capital will know. In this RR is no different from the rest of us - his assertion that gold is a good hedge could have been got at first hand simply by reading the Financial Times.

Therefore if you want short term accurate predictions don't go to the Marxist perspective documents - go to the bourgeois journals. I say this quite unequivocally because I don't believe that Marxism is concerned with what is essentially a pragmatic art of forecasting whether there will be a boom or slump next year. For this reason I, for one, make no apology for studying the bourgeois journals.

But if bourgeois economics is more sophisticated in the short-term then Marxism is more powerful in the long term, for it sees capitalism as part of a historical process (something of which the bourgeoisie are incapable) and understands that general historical laws manifest themselves regardless of temporary fluctuations.

Thus Marxists should concern themselves with understanding how these general laws manifest themselves in concrete and this inevitably means that any short term predictions are hedged in with conditions and qualifications. We are not able to say with any precision what is going to happen in the next 12 months and neither was Marx. What we can do is to try and understand the general tendencies and put forward possible outcomes.

This latter course was followed by PS in his perspectives document and is described by RR as "wooly" for this reason. I think that its merit was that it sought to understand and not to bluster and I voted for it on that basis.

And now to RR's specific complaints about the article which appeared in the IB as notes to the introduction I gave to the discussion on the NC on the current situation. RR's main objection is that the oil crisis "appears suddenly" into our perspective, whereas in fact it is entirely ephemeral, could have been predicted and moreover was predicted by RR himself.

Is the oil crisis ephemeral? I don't think so. Oil is not just any old commodity - it is the most important commodity for the Western capitalist world. Electricity generation depends on it, as does the car industry, as does the manufacture of plastics, drugs,

paints and many other commodities and when the prices of crude oil triples in as many months are we not reasonable in assuming that a major change has taken place?

And was that major change predictable? RR says that the Arab countries had been threatening for some time to push up the price of oil by cutting supplies. In fact some Arab countries had been threatening this - others, namely Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states (and these are the major producers) had specifically said that they were opposed to such a move. What united them was not fluctuations in the exchange rates but the outbreak of war (another apparition perhaps?) and moreover the initial successes of Egypt in that war, which gave her the necessary prestige to act as a leader of the unification. The oil cuts were first used as a political weapon and it was this that forced up prices. Now that the war has temporarily subsided I think that we can expect Arab unity to do likewise and perhaps depressing in oil prices - but the power of the oil weapon having been demonstrated so effectively the Arab states will not allow prices to fall much below their present rate.

It is quite true that we didn't predict this chain of events and it would have been impossible to do so. RR didn't predict it either, although he quotes the following sentence from his document as proof that he did:

"... as the pressure builds up, with the need to secure markets and guarantee sources of raw materials, especially energy sources, then the jockeying will undoubtedly turn to bitter struggles which will continually threaten to escalate into armed confrontation."

The three redeeming words here "especially energy sources" were not I believe meant to refer to a situation of competition for oil, the supply of which was being deliberately restricted by its producers. Rather they were inspired by a theory that has been very popular amongst bourgeois commentators - namely that there is an absolute shortage of energy physically available in useful forms. This theory has been taken up by RR in a rather slap-dash and uncritical way, for certainly if it is true then it has implications not just for capitalism but for a future socialist society as well.

But the main argument pointing to the fact that RR did not see it all coming is that his perspective is completely outdated by the oil crisis. RR's main reason for predicting "worsening periodic crises, increasingly feverish economic fluctuations" was the demise of the US as the major capitalist power and the rise of Germany and Japan. Now if one measures the strength of capitalist nations by the strength of their currencies (and this RR always does) then the position has been neatly reversed. Because the US imports very little oil from the Middle East its position has strengthened relative to Germany and Japan who will both be running balance of payments deficits and for this reason the "mighty dollar" rides high once again on the foreign exchange markets. But the real benefits will of course accrue to the Arab states and if we look solely at the monetary sphere in this way then we shall be forced to say that Saudi-Arabia will become the strongest capitalist nation in the world, since in three years time it will hold more foreign currency than any other nation!

How does this change in the world situation affect British capitalism? At the NC and in the IB article I put forward the case that the Tories had managed to create something of a boom by increasing home demand and cutting taxes. I argued that the boom was illusionary in as

much as that although production has increased (and profits had increased much more) this did not reflect a similar increase in investment and was not likely to result in increased investment either. Moreover by stimulating demand the Tories had also opened the door to imports, which together with the higher prices for raw materials had led to balance of payments deficit.

A balance of payments deficit is hardly anything new for the British economy and since there has existed for some 25 years now a liberal system of world trade, it has always been possible to finance this deficit by borrowing and redress it later by deflating. The effect of the oil crisis is however that all the major capitalist countries (except the US) will be running balance of payments deficits. Rather than a liberal atmosphere for credit Britain will have to compete for loans from the Arab states, the IMF and on the US market. Certainly Britain will be one of the least attractive propositions to any borrower, and the conditions placed upon loans will be a lot more severe than they were when the last Labour government had to go in for large scale borrowing.

Thus Heath's "gamble" of expanding on the basis of credit and hoping that increased investment in industry would lead a redressing of the trade deficit has fallen down. Credit is not available on such terms. Instead any government will be forced to deflate. I don't know whether this will mean tax increases, import restrictions, credit restrictions or what. What we do know is that it will mean a concerted effort to contain and even cut working class living standards - the icing on Labour's cake won't last for long.

RR begins his criticism of this with a sentence which is only remarkable for the number of confusions which can be crammed into a few words:

"If profit margins were rising and expansion was achieved without investment (?) in industry (?) but by fuller utilisation of plant, stocks and labour (what's that if it is not investment in industry? The first two may not be new investment but the latter certainly is) if these two suppositions prove anything, it is that there has been overinvestment in the past, not underinvestment."
(The unexplained question marks are all RR's)

Firstly RR makes me say that production can be achieved and profits be made without investment of capital - then he sallies forth to kill the beast! But I never wrote nor said any such nonsense - and if I had of done then the charge should have been not bourgeois economics but lunacy. What I said was that the increase in production did not reflect a commensurate increase in investment and showed little signs of encouraging any such increase in investment. How is it possible to increase production without a corresponding increase in investment or even with no increase in investment at all? Simply because when demand is slack capitalists who are expecting things to pick up keep high stocks and keep plant and labour working at half pace. If and when demand does pick up then output can be increased with only very marginal increases in investment or indeed none at all.

This applies to labour just as much as it does to plant and stocks. RR may not know it but every class conscious capitalist does ~~shows~~ that the intensity of labour he requires from his employees depends on the state of his order book. Of course an employer may or may not be able to impose an increase in the intensity of labour according to the degree of organisation of labour, he may have to pay a little more for it in the way of bonus schemes, but the general tendency still exists. It is a tendency which it is not possible to demonstrate empirically since the government statistics which show an increasing productivity of labour subsume both increases in the productiveness of labour (more efficient machinery etc.) and increases in the intensity of labour (working harder). However I think cdes. will agree that such schemes as job evaluation, "productivity" deals and measured day work have more to do with the latter than with the former.

There is no doubt that slack did exist in the economy and that when demand increased

the slack was taken up, and in fact taken up to such an extent that shortages of labour and raw materials became a constraint on production. This process is nothing more than the normal capitalist cycle or rather part of it, and I mentioned it to demonstrate that the boom had a healthier appearance than was in fact the case. For when the slack was taken up the over-riding weakness of British capitalism - specifically underinvestment in industry - began to show, for production failed to keep up with the stimulated home demand and imported goods were sucked in.

"Underinvestment in industry" means that the British capitalist class is unable to compete equally with its international rivals - both on the home market and abroad - because of the backwardness of industry, its outdated techniques and plant, low productivity and a lack of concentration and centralisation of capital. This is what lies at the root of such manifestations as the persistent trade deficit and the ever falling pound. There is nothing at all inconsistent with describing this as the general condition of British capitalism and at the same time realising that all capitalist economies only come up to full working capacity periodically.

"But there is than this" writes RR and although one wouldn't have thought so, there is indeed. Next RR asserts that real profits have in fact been decreasing. Well first of all let us have the facts. The following table is from a sample analysis conducted by the Financial Times and shows the sum trading profits of key firms.

(£000's)	1972	1973	%age change
Industries	403,064	551,191	+36.8
Financial	126,060	179,981	+42.8
Commodities	54,738	81,742	+49.3

But says RR the increase is merely illusion because the £ of 1973 has less value than that of 1972. True enough. But I can guarantee that if you find out the exchange ratios for 1972 and 1973 then you can convert these figures to dollars, marks, gold credits of baked beans and you would still come up with the same result - i.e. the mass of profit has risen and so has the rate of profit.

But to do such a conversion might enlighten us as to the devaluation of the £ but it would conceal something else. To get to the root of the matter we will have to find why prices are rising and paper money is being devalued. RR gives his reasons as follows:

"In reality money is becoming less valuable and therefore it takes more of it to exchange against other commodities".

And why is money becoming less valuable?

"An increase in its mass for circulation can degrade it as a measure of value and as a store of accumulated value.

As a degraded measure of value, it of course translates into every day life as rising prices."

Now these statements are truly remarkable from one who sets out to combat bourgeois slavishness within the group, for they are not inspired by Marxism at all but by the bourgeois monetarist school of thought, which believes that prices depend upon the supply of money. In fact just the reverse. What RR should have said is:

"Prices have risen, therefore more monetary tokens are required to circulate the same value of commodities. But since the greater number of tokens are spread over the same value of commodities, then the token represents less value than it did previously."

Of course the fact that money circulates in token form and has a separate existence to the money commodity, gives the theoretical possibility that the two can fly apart by governments resorting to the printing presses. Such a move however requires a conscious decision by the state issuing the currency (e.g. printing more money in order to pay debts) and leads to a slump in trade and production.

The increase in world prices however corresponded to an expansion in world trade, which existed up to end of last year. It was this increased demand which forced prices up and was responsible for an increase in the money supply. Looked at this way round inflation is not money losing its value and eroding capitalist profits, but prices (which are in the control of the capitalists to a certain extent) rising and thus increasing the rate of exploitation and the rate of profit.

If there is a general increase in prices with no corresponding increase in wages then profits have increased and this is no less real for the fact that the price increases devalue the money in which the profits are measured. If there is a general increase in prices, a compensating increase in wages and also an increase in productivity and rationalisations, then profits will again increase. This is exactly what has happened under Phases I & II.

JW

Intro: the demand for a nat. min wage of £30 appears from time to time as an optional extra in our programme. The slogan was adopted with little disagreement, which reflects its correctness. However the consensus hides a number of confusions, particularly about the status of the demand. The position taken here is that the slogan should encourage activity rather than passivity, and that it is a priority for immediate agitation.

There is a need for much more research, both empirical (current rates, states of claims, etc) and historical (Quebec, German pub. sector deal, etc).

"THE LOW-PAID WORKER"

Wage levels: the present mean national wage is around £28 - £30. The floor for male full-time workers is around £20. The groups of workers most affected by a national minimum of £30 would be those at present on £27 or under; they would gain directly from its implementation, and might be persuaded to fight for it.

What they do: the main groups earning less than £27 are:

- | | |
|---|--|
| Local govt. manual workers (inc. ambulancemen, dustmen) | Cleaners (private sector) |
| Hospital ancilliary workers | Catering workers (") |
| Nurses (students & assistants) | Assembly workers |
| University porters etc. | packers, checkers (e.g. food firms) |
| Postmen | Some private sector unskilled manual workers |
| Some secretaries, filing clerks | |
| Rag-trade workers, e.g. seamstresses | |

The main characteristics of these groups are:

1. They mostly work in distribution or service industries; very few are engaged in producing the means of production.
2. Most of the jobs are unskilled manual work; very few are skilled, e.g. ambulancemen, a few are white-collar, e.g. clerks.
3. More than half are women.
4. Many are employees of the state.

Organisation: most workers below £27 will not be in unions. Of those in unions, a large proportion will be in three: T&GWU, NUPE, GIMU. All these unions have members in hospitals, local govt., universities etc, but all negotiate sectionally. Other unions involved include COMSE, APEX, USDAW ETC. Generally these unions are characterised by weak organisation and a low level of activity at the workplace. The other side of this weakness is the right-wing nature of the TU officials, undisciplined by the members in day-to-day struggles. (See the roles of Fisher, Jones, etc. in the ancilliary workers' dispute.)

Consciousness: some general statements may be made about this section of the class. In stable conditions they will tend to be more influenced by the ideas of the ruling-class and see less possibility of change through trade-unionism than engineers or printers. This backwardness is the consequence of repetitive work, the inability to achieve much improvement through organisation and strike action, and there is also a self-selection factor, e.g. in hospital workers. However the concomitant of backwardness is volatility: in a big convulsion consciousness will develop by qualitative leaps from pro-management Toryism to revolutionary ideas beyond trade-unionism. (IS reportedly recruited 130 ancilliary workers in the downturn of the 72 ancilliary workers strike, despite having no strategy to offer.)

THE LOGIC OF THE SLOGAN

National minimum wage slogans figure in many left programmes: the RSL says £35, IS says "at least £25" in a forgotten corner of SW. However these slogans are essentially passive propaganda, with no consequences for the activity of the class. Our agitation must relate both to pre-existing ideas and to the activity of the class.

The pre-existing demands: claims now in include £30 for ancilliary workers, and a similar but separate claim for local govt. workers. There will be some agitation for joint activity at the base in these sections (e.g. in IS's rank and file papers), but there is not as yet a concerted pressure for joint claim and campaign, i.e. an explicit link. Other claims are not known to me at time of writing.

The national minimum demand: first some clarifications; "£30" should be interpreted as

£30 gross basic for a full week, i.e. before shift allowances, bonus, or overtime, and before tax and insurance stoppages, and for the present number of hours (c.40). Of course a claim for 35 hours without loss of pay is O.K., but it should not be smuggled in by a verbal ambiguity. The precise figure is critical in a national demand: it cannot be bargained for like a sectional claim; engineers might go for a £10 rise and settle for £8.00, but we should not leave open the option of trading away £30 for £27.50 and prod deals all round. Too high (RSLE35) encourages passivity; too low is not worth the effort; £30 coincides with some existing sectional claims, is worth fighting for, and has a good ring about it.

The sliding scale: this demand can be discussed separately to some extent, and will not be discussed here, except to say that there is an inconsistency in advocating increases on the minimum but not on all wages. £30 at present prices would have to be increased to £35 or more by April 75 to allow for 15% inflation and increased tax. The figure would act as a focus for an inchoate movement, so if taken up the figure could not be recalled for modification by WF alone. The compromise seems to be a rather cumbersome formula, something like: "A national minimum wage of £30 at April 74 prices, automatically elevated as prices rise, the increase to be calculated on the actual expenditure of people on this wage".

The major forces: the achievement of a £30 minimum wage would significantly change the proportion of the social product returned to labour. Therefore it would be resisted vigorously by the employing class. This would apply whichever sub-committee of the ruling-class formed the government of the day, even though the implementation of the demand requires govt. legislation. Labour might be slightly more susceptible to a minimum because of the pressure of its voting base, but would not implement such a redistribution of wealth away from capital without intense pressure from below; so, Labour or Tory, it would mean a fight. This does not make it a "transitional Demand" as some ORA and IS people have argued against me!

The other major forces are the condition of the contending army of the proletariat: its numbers, weapons, morale, general staff. Nearly all the workers potentially involved in a national minimum claim are in a weak bargaining position; withdrawal of labour would only indirectly affect profits, and similar considerations apply to occupations and other tactics. However any direct action can pressure the employers and government; when public services are disrupted much depends on whether the workers or the employers are seen as responsible for the disruption; the political effect of a strike of the lower-paid would greatly offset its weak economic effects. Furthermore the effect of any sanction increases as the square of the numbers involved, not simply in direct proportion. A largely inchoate movement would grow like a snowball: doubling its size would lead to redoubling again and again. If one militant group, e.g. dustmen or ambulancemen in a big city took action in support of the demand, the demand would become realistic to similarly placed workers; eventually even the most backwards and totally unorganised workers could be won to the fight. At present the demand is not realistic to anyone; perhaps a concerted campaign in NUPE by us would start to make it so. Moreover a national minimum fight would not arouse sectional rivalries, and support could be expected from higher-paid workers; a reasonable minimum wage acts as a safety net in case of losing a skilled job through disability or redundancy. So the political dimension of the struggle would be class-wide, even though its effect on production was quite small.

An alliance of productive workers and low-paid workers would create a much more favourable balance of forces, but to advocate it would be to cross diametrically the present contours of the proletariat, and would be voluntaristic. (See the IMG's calls "NUM - AUEW unite!"). Whereas the nat. min. slogan does not emerge spontaneously from the class (at least as a strategic slogan), it does correspond to the subjective aspect fairly closely, as well as contending with the objective tasks of the class as outlined above.

Organisation: the weakness of the organisations at the base presents particular problems. TUC leaders and the bureaucrats of the pub. sector unions would be carried at the crest of the wave, with the possibility of a gigantic sell-out. Two tactics could be posed to combat this: 1) reform of NUPE, T&G, G&M particularly by pushing NEC candidates on the nat. min platform plus union democracy, and the discipline of R&F organisations before the hot struggle. 2) advocacy of base organisations during the struggle a body in each town drawing delegates from each union branch supporting the demand.

Perhaps at this time it is appropriate to look at the class-wide context. The very widespread activity envisaged in the last section might result in , or result from, a general convulsion approaching general strike proportions. A high minimum wage might be one of the gains of a May 68 type strike; after a period of direct conflict of the classes the actual struggle for power is called off, but concrete gains are made. This would occur only if the idea was in general currency, and our role then would be play down the concrete reform and argue for going for the jackpot.

Conclusion:

- 1) WF should mount an immediate agitational campaign using the arguments outlined here, using the paper to start with.
- 2) A lot of historical and empirical research needs doing.
- 3) A pamphlet should be produced expanding and popularising the ideas, to sell to contacts.
- 4) We should approach contacts in the main public sector unions around the theme: "Turn the sectional demand into a National Minimum Demand - and win it!".
- 5) Simultaneously campaign on union reform and rank-and-file organisation.
- 6) Campaign in women's organisations around the theme "A living wage for women workers!"
- 7) Argue in the LP and Trades Councils for "Support those taking action for our policy!"

If you think this conception is wrong, or that scenario-painting is a bad habit, or that nobody will listen, then reply quickly. This demand cannot be treated as an optional extra, as its logic is a strategy for several million workers.

EC 13 APR 74

-27-

NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEETING. 16 March 74.

Present: DS, RL, SCy, JW, AH, CBy, MT. RR, JS, NS, SM arrived late because of car breakdown. PS and TD absent.

Alternates present: EH, JC, NS. Also PR.

Chair DS. Minutes MT, later JW and SCy.

1. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING.

DS raised question of regularity of NC arrangements. Agreed MT should consult with TD and try to fix a regular date.

EH raised a point from the Steering Committee minutes of 16.2.74, concerning a request from a branch for a commission on a certain comrade's behaviour. EH thought that such points should not be included in the minutes; to include it amounted to spreading suspicion without warrant. MT said that since the matter had been raised formally, it had to be dealt with formally. Agreed that the minutes could however have been more tactful.

2. PROGRAMME FOR "RANK AND FILE PAPERS" CONFERENCE.

AH presented a list of amendments as per IB 18 (March 1974). These were based on the resolution passed at the last WF conference, but they went into more detail because the nature of the official IS resolution for the conference was that of a "shopping list" going into almost trivial detail on some points.

At the same time as trying to get to speak on amendments we should produce a comprehensive counter-programme for propaganda distribution at the conference.

AH then explained the amendments in some detail.

MT proposed to add an item to the amendment on racialism stating "support for oppressed peoples fighting imperialism by any means necessary". There was such an item in our conference resolution; the minority movement also had something similar in its programme. It might be in fact sectarian to go into greater detail on this point, but at the very least we should insist on the generality.

JW particularly in relation to South Africa.

There was a detailed discussion on ways and means of getting amendments in, given that for better or for worse 16th March was the last official date for such amendments and we have none in yet.

Agreed: a) to produce a comprehensive counter-programme with the signatures of as many shop stewards, etc, as we can get.

b) to put in emergency resolutions on the hunger strikers and on the social contract.

c) to put in the amendment on women's rights from GB

d) to put in the amendment on racialism from JS, later.

e) not to attempt any 'fiddles' / the matter of getting official TU branch backing for our resolutions.

The minutes stop here because one comrade responsible for taking the minutes in the latter part of the NC cannot find the notes he made.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
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1100 EAST 58TH STREET
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60637

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD
SUBJECT: [Illegible]

[Illegible text]

[Illegible text]

[Illegible text]

[Illegible text]